

The Pennsylvania Chesapeake Bay Showcase Watershed: Conewago Creek



Overview

President Obama's May 2009 Executive Order charges the Federal government with exercising greater leadership in restoring the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. A complete Bay cleanup is targeted for 2025 with activities broken into two-year milestones.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and its partners are helping farmers voluntarily implement conservation practices to reduce nutrient and sediment runoff into the Bay. NRCS funding through the 2008 Farm Bill Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative provides \$72 million over the next three years to reduce pollution from agricultural lands.

NRCS is establishing three Showcase Watersheds: Smith Creek in Virginia, Upper Chester in Maryland and the Conewago in Pennsylvania. These watersheds are designed to show what can be accomplished by bringing people and groups together to solve natural resource problems in a targeted area. Successful approaches learned here can be replicated in other watersheds.

Why Conewago Creek?

Many public and private groups working in the watershed provide a broad base of support for collaborative conservation efforts.

The variety of agricultural enterprises will enable NRCS and its partners to demonstrate a wide array of conservation systems on farmsteads, cropland, pastureland, forestland, and riparian areas.

Focusing federal technical and financial assistance will help accelerate implementation of the Conewago Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) plan, which is already underway.

What can I expect?

- Watershed residents will help develop innovative approaches and select priority practices.
- An NRCS coordinator will oversee planning, implementation and evaluation activities.
- Partners will provide outreach to all agricultural landowners.
- Increased federal funds, as well as state and private funds will be leveraged to increase landowner participation and cost-share.

Partners and Their Role

- Penn State Univ./Cooperative Ext.
- Three Conservation Districts (Dauphin, Lancaster, Lebanon)
- Tri-County Conewago Creek Watershed Association
- PA Dept. of Environmental Protection
- PA Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources
- ZedX, Inc
- NRCS
- Lower Susquehanna Center for Land and Water
- Chesapeake Bay Foundation
- Environmental Credit Corporation
- American Farmland Trust
- Capital RC&D
- State Conservation Commission
- Farm Service Agency
- Agriculture Research Service
- USGS

Partners provide guidance and direction for the project. They leverage monies with matching funds for cost sharing on best management practices. They help establish goals and objectives and identify priority practices. They commit technical and financial resources to expand outreach efforts and increase program participation. Partners will:

- Educate watershed citizens about practices and approaches to conserving natural resources.
- Serve on the Watershed Steering Committee and the State Technical Committee.
- Submit proposals for additional funding.
- Target financial and technical resources toward the watershed and help implement projects.
- Promote ecosystem services and encourage environmental credit trading.
- Assist with tracking, monitoring and evaluating progress in meeting water quality goals.

Conewago Creek Profile

The Conewago Creek watershed covers 33,606 acres. Forty-four percent of the watershed is in Dauphin County, 37 percent is in Lebanon County and 18 percent in Lancaster County. The majority of the watershed is farmland and consists of a diverse mixture of crops and pasture.

Contact Information

Questions can be emailed to Dan Dostie, State Resource Conservationist, at: daniel.dostie@pa.usda.gov.

Visit www.pa.nrcs.usda.gov for more information.



Conewago Watershed Applied Conservation Practices

